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LETTER DATED 24 MAY 1996 FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to refer to the identical letters dated 29 February 1996 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the President of the Republic of Cameroon and to the Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (S/1996/150). In those letters, the President of the Council stated that the members welcomed my proposal to the parties that I should send a fact-finding mission to the Bakassi peninsula, urged the two Governments concerned to cooperate fully with this mission, and requested me to continue to monitor this matter closely and to report to the Council.

In pursuit of this mandate, I dispatched my Special Envoy, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, to the region in order to consult with the Heads of State of the two countries concerned. Mr. Brahimi held a number of meetings with the two leaders between 9 and 16 May 1996. He has reported to me that President Paul Biya of Cameroon stressed that his country would abide by any decision reached by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and would welcome any action by the United Nations, including the dispatch of a fact-finding mission to the disputed area and to the region. President Biya also suggested that some United Nations military observers be stationed in the area to help prevent any renewed confrontation.

The Head of State of Nigeria, General Sani Abacha, while indicating his preference for a bilateral solution to the dispute, recognized that a mission of the United Nations could help in this regard. In a letter to me dated 12 May 1996, General Abacha indicated his awareness that the ICJ had urged the two countries to lend assistance to a United Nations mission to Bakassi and said that, in deference to this order, the Government of Nigeria accepted in principle the idea of such a mission. He added that he would shortly be writing to me and to the Security Council with a detailed response to this proposal. Finally, he reiterated his personal desire to find an amicable solution to the Bakassi dispute in the best African tradition and in a brotherly manner and would welcome any offer to assist in that regard.

I shall keep the Security Council informed of any further developments on this subject. In the meantime, I should be grateful if you could bring the contents of this letter to the attention of its members.

(Signed) Boutros BOUTROS-GHALI